

Teaching Reflections Summer 2015

Wow. What a term ☺

My CES scores remained strong last term and I continue having some success (as expressed by student comments) with connecting with my students. I have to say that this semester I had a number of students that clearly “got it” and expressed comments in class and in informal conversations that showed they were well on their way to gaining/enhancing their sociological imaginations. So gratifying.

Changes I am going to make for Fall 2015 for Undergrad Courses

1. Implement PeerScholar Software

In March 2015, with the help of a dozen student volunteers, I was able to test PeerScholar. In follow-up surveys they unanimously agreed that the platform was better than my use of the Multiple Choice (MC) testing software in MySocLab. PeerScholar allows me to have students watch thought-provoking video-clips and then answer a few short questions on whether or not concepts we discuss in class/the text, can be applied to what they watched. The software then anonymously assigns 6 student peers who can look at the assignment and offer constructive criticism on how to improve the answer. Using this software allows me to move beyond MC (which I don't dislike but does not fit with my pedagogy that aspires to have students “think” about the content and not simply “choose” the best answer that is presented to them) and lets students benefit from the insights/ideas of their peers. The added bonus is this software is less expensive than MySocLab.

2. Implement Turnitin Software

My hope is to use the anti-plagiarism software to help students identify when they are plagiarising and how to prevent it. (I wanted to use this for our 3 tutorial assignments). However, I was informed in August 2015 that the University of Victoria was no longer supporting the software. Oh well. I tried.

3. Continue to defer textbook royalties from sales at UVic.

This year saw the 10th Annual CW Mills speaker (Dr. Adam Jones) come to the campus. While I am very proud of what the series was able to achieve over its tenure, I have decided to move on.

Starting this Fall, royalties will now be diverted to a local non-profit organization called, “Out of the Rain” that provides shelter for homeless youth (ages 15-25) throughout the winter. Our donation will pay for (apparently very popular) weekly “pizza parties” for the entire 2015-2016 season. I hope that students will see that by working together and each contributing a little, we are able to make a lasting impact in some people's lives.

4. Change the number of tutorial assignments from 3 to 2.

While I am not convinced that this change is in the undergraduate student's best interests, the reality is I do not have the TA hours necessary to grade these assignments to the detail they deserve. The TA's are

rightfully overwhelmed and I hope that modifying the number of assignments will help them manage their difficult schedules.

5. For Fall 2015, host CourseSpaces sites for my classes

My reason for doing this is to try and help the TAs better manage the scores for their students. I have been “promised” that CourseSpaces will allow the TAs to be able to enter grades for their students directly and that those marks will magically populate my overall grades for the course. My fingers are crossed so tightly they are white...

In conclusion, I felt that Spring 2015 was a great term and I am hoping that the changes I make for the Fall, go as smoothly as possible 😊